

Enhancing Teacher Quality For Effective Teaching And Learning Of Social Studies At The Upper Basic Education Level

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ABSTRACT

Enhancing quality of social studies teacher is significantly necessary for effective teaching and learning of social studies at the upper basic schools in Nigeria. The need to enhance social studies teacher quality are addressed as: defective implementation of social studies, poor-performance of students, dynamics changes, institutionalization of social studies and functional education delivery. Strategies for enhancing social studies teacher quality are presented as follows: Qualitative training of social studies teachers, continuous professional development, employment of professionally trained social studies teachers, quality teaching and effective publications and designing of materials for effective teaching. The envisaged constraints, conclusion and recommendations are highlighted.

Keywords: Teacher quality, effective teaching and learning, social studies.

INTRODUCTION

The qualitatively trained social studies teacher is an asset and strategic figure in the effective implementation of social studies curriculum at the upper basic level in Nigeria. Experts opinions tends to suggests that there are many non-professionally trained social studies teachers teaching social studies at the upper basic education level (Nwaubani, 2008; Okam, 2012; Mezieobi, 2013; Akinola, 2014 & Ikem, 2014) among others. This lacuna suggests that social studies is not effectively implemented to achieve its transformative objectives of producing functional citizens into values, skills, attitudes and cognition for realizing integrated, collaborative and inter dependent national development.

The basic education level is fundamentally strategic to the development of social studies education in Nigeria, this is because the young learners are needed to be equipped with right contents and values to exhibit attitudes and behaviour for cohesive nation building. The upper basic level is a stage of motivating interest in learners for them to become effective social studies practitioners at present and mostly in future. Against this background, Mezieobi (2016:8) said "...there is need (for) continuity of (social studies) programme dissemination from the UBE level to the tertiary education level". It is to be noted that the defective implementation of social studies at this stage affects the volume of converts into the profession

of social studies education. It is therefore imperative that social studies teacher education should be updated and enhanced in view of sporadic dynamic changes in the state of Nigeria and the globe at large. Okam (2012) observed that there is “the unsatisfactory status of social studies education as a curriculum instrument not only for cultivating the ideals of national value re-orientation but also for bringing about improved and enhanced human and social development amongst young learners”. Esu (2012) observed that capacity building of social studies teachers should be focused on innovation in the society and how to improve students capacity through teachers qualitative instruction. She expatiated that social studies teachers ought to improve their teaching patterns and in addition, diversely improve learners thinking patterns on emerging national issues.

To give deeper concern and insight to the problem of this study, the following will be addressed: The need for enhancing social studies teacher quality, strategies for enhancing social studies teacher quality and envisaged constraints.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of culturally diverse society in an interdependent world (Nzegbulem, 2014). Social studies equips the learners with values, attitudes and skills to become functional citizens, who are nationally conscious and responsive to their country’s challenges. It imparts civic education, human relations education, environmental education, technological education, socio-cultural education amongst others. The essence of social studies is to expand the knowledge capability of the learners locally, nationally and at the global level. Social studies goal is to develop civilized and patriotic citizens.

The nature of social studies as a revolving and continuously expanding curriculum in terms of content enrichment, integration with contemporary emerging issues, Information Communication Technologies and pedagogies calls for continuous development of both professionally trained and non-professionally trained social studies teachers in the school system (Mezieobi, 2012). Goestch and Davis (2000) associated quality with worthiness, relevance, excellence and efficiency. Social studies teacher quality depicts the functionality of operational capability of teachers in implementing the social studies curriculum based on set standards and objectives.

The Need For Enhancing Social Studies Teacher Quality

Social studies teacher quality need to be enhanced because of the following identified factors:

Defective Implementation of Social Studies Curriculum:

The implementation of social studies at the upper basic level is yet to be appreciably effective. According to Okobia (2015:68):

The implementation of social studies in the past has not been very encouraging. Report of studies evaluation (social studies) curriculum implementation demonstrates a wide gap between the expectations of the curriculum developers and the perception and attitudes of teachers in actual classroom practice.

Furthermore, Akinola (2014), empirical study in North central geographical zone of Nigeria, established that social studies at the upper basic level is yet to have full qualified and competent teachers in the use of inquiry method as a pedagogy. The study further confirmed

that there is a significant difference between teachers qualification and their application of inquiry method amongst others. This scenario calls for urgent enhancement of the social studies teachers quality at the upper basic level, in order to actualize the objectives of social studies.

Poor Performance of Students in Social Studies:

There are evident poor performances of students in social studies at the upper basic level. Imogie (2010), observed that teacher quality determines learners strength of learning and by extension performance in internal and external examinations.

Ukadike (2005), in a study found that students' poor performance at the upper basic level are based on ineffective teaching strategies and appropriate learning environment to induce effective learning. In addition, Ikem (2014) remarked that poor performance in social studies and learning of social studies are based on the following factors: the employment of significant number of non-professionally qualified social studies teachers who lack the professional instructional orientation to present content to the cognition of learners, including inadequate use of resources, improper delivery of instruction to enhance high level of comprehension amongst learners.

Dynamic Changes:

There are rapid explosive development in Information and Communication Technology including vast emergent issues as well as the initiation of various innovative instructional strategies as future wheel, use of computers, websites amongst others, which requires teachers know how. Maduwesi (2001) doubts the credibility of (social studies) teachers in meeting up with emergent issues of innovation in content and specially the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT).

Institutionalization of Social Studies:

The development and growth of social studies can only be stabilized by professionally trained social studies teachers who are abreast of the pedagogies, contents philosophies and objectives of the programme. This is the way to lay a solid foundation for the institutionalization of social studies at the upper basic level. Mezieobi (2016) noted that social studies practitioners are expected to exhibit certain competencies. These competencies are effective use of innovative pedagogies, meaningful organization of contents to stimulate learner's appreciation of societal problems, values for peaceful co-existence, skills for survival contribution to the stability of the nation through productive contributions towards the growth and development of the Nigeria's economy. These conditions call for enhanced social studies teacher quality.

Functional Education:

The provision of functional education for self sustenance and survival skills are the objectives of social studies education. Against this background, Akpochafo (2014:10) articulated the essence of effective social studies teaching for employability and said "... (effective implementation of social studies curriculum) is the only way to produce effective and employable students who can be active participants in today's interconnected world that is full of immense opportunities, challenges and uncertainties".

Strategies for Enhancing Social Studies Teachers Quality

Social studies teachers' quality can be enhanced through the following strategies:

Qualitative Training of Social Studies Teachers:

The social studies teacher as a crucial and important factor in the realization of social studies objective and goals in the Nigerian environment and specifically the upper basic school requires qualitative training and updating of their intellectual bank. This is because Imogie (2010) upholds that quality teaching and learning (of social studies) depends on teachers input, quality and orientations. The quality of social studies teacher creates effective teaching and learning scenario for maximal learning outcome.

Quality Teaching:

To ensure quality teaching and learning of social studies, social studies teachers in training and serving social studies teachers ought to update their competencies through conferences, seminars and workshops. Trainee social studies teachers should be exposed to innovative instructional pedagogies to enable effective teaching. Okobia (2012) argued that teacher factor is strategic in qualitative teaching and implementation of the social studies curriculum. The social studies teacher quality must be enhanced and improved to enable the teacher adjust to current innovation and dynamic changes in content, pedagogies and resources.

Continuous Professional Development:

In view of the dynamic nature of social studies curriculum content in incorporating emerging societal issues, Mezieobi (2016) presented that the lacuna of practitioners in the implementation of social studies requires continuous professional development to update their professional currency. He called for schools support in assisting social studies teachers' professional development, maintaining that social studies teachers need effective supervision by the experienced teachers, reiterating the need to keep in touch with professional development trends. This approach will enhance quality instruction and learning of social studies.

Employment of Professionally Trained Social Studies Teachers:

The employment of professionally trained social studies teachers will greatly assist in quality teaching, delivery of content and learning. Their expertise will facilitate teaching and learning as found by Akinola (2014). Ikem (2014) blamed poor performance of students in social studies on the employment of non-professionally trained social studies teachers.

Publications:

Social studies professionals are challenged to publish credible books, journals and periodicals that will uplift the resources and materials used in teaching social studies. Okam (2012) and Mezieobi (2013) condemned the publication of social studies textbooks by unprofessional experts who do not blend information and data to inject values and skills in learners.

Envisaged Constraints:

The following constraints may work against quality teacher enhancement, they are as follows:

- (7) There are many unprofessionally trained social studies lecturers in colleges of education and universities in Nigeria teaching social studies;
- (8) The emerging innovative teaching methods are hardly emphasized in teacher preparation;
- (9) The non-recruitment of professionally trained social studies teachers significantly at the upper basic may jeopardize teaching and learning;
- (10) Serving social studies teachers scarcely are exposed to conferences, workshops and seminars;

- (11) Educational administrators erroneously believe that any person in humanities' and social sciences can teach social studies; and
- (12) Teachers non use of innovative instructional methods, predominantly use lecture method which may not encourage reflective thinking, creativity and inquiry consciousness in the learners.

CONCLUSION

The updating of social studies teacher quality is primary in the teaching and learning of social studies at the upper basic level. This paper incisively deliberated on the need to enhance social studies teachers' quality, the strategies to achieve effective teaching of social studies, conclusion and recommendations were highlighted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❖ Based on the problems identified from this discourse, the following recommendations are potent:
- ❖ There is need for continuous professional development of social studies teachers in order to achieve effective teaching.
- ❖ Trainee social studies teachers ought to be exposed to innovative instructional pedagogies to make them effective teachers in practice.
- ❖ There is the need for number of professionally trained social studies lecturers in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. This is to ensure proper development of social studies.
- ❖ Schools should take interest in the professional development of social studies teachers by funding conferences, workshops and seminars; in order to improve their capabilities and quality of instruction.
- ❖ Social studies practitioners are challenges to publish credible books, journals and develop materials that will improve the quality of resources used in teaching social studies.

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